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Bleeding Hearts:

How Revising a Mediocre Screenplay Helped Me Find My Voice

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Bleeding Hearts:
How Revising a Mediocre Screenplay Helped Me Find My Voice

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Report

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To everyone who made it through any version of this screenplay.

Bleeding Hearts:
How Revising a Mediocre Screenplay Helped Me Find My Voice

by

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"*Bleeding Hearts: How Revising a Mediocre Screenplay Helped Me Find My Voice*" examines the development of Joseph Pudas' feature screenplay *Bleeding Hearts*. It tracks the course of how *Bleeding Hearts* was written and provides a candid look at the creative process, specifically how the writing and rewriting of this particular screenplay helped Pudas discover truths about his sensibilities and limitations. In his two years at the University of Texas, Pudas took the opportunity to experiment with different genres and tones in order to pinpoint his strengths and weaknesses as a screenwriter. *Bleeding Hearts* was initially intended as a straightforward romantic comedy set in the political sphere, but early on Pudas encountered difficulties with tone and genre (romantic comedy vs. cynical political satire) that would continue to persist throughout the bloated first draft. With the assistance of his peers and thesis committee, Pudas reworked the concept and wrote a more streamlined, romantic draft closer in line to what he originally envisioned the project to be.

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Chapter 1: Background and Sensibilities

When I was a young boy growing up in central California mere hours away from Hollywood, I quickly discovered that cinema would continue to captivate me throughout my entire life. The movies that provided a gateway to my love of cinema were the unpretentious one-man army action films of the 80s and 90s starring the likes of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone. My tastes broadened as I got older, and when my father showed me a snowy VHS copy of *GoodFellas* at the tender age of eleven, I felt like my eyes had been completely opened: I could not be content simply seeing films; I needed to make them.

GoodFellas – which to this date is my overall favorite film – is still the movie that most significantly influenced and shaped my personal tastes in cinema and storytelling. In addition to being a thoroughly exhilarating tour through a fascinating world replete with shifty rogues and violent decadence, it is as seductively stylish and immersive a cinematic experience as I have ever come across. It sucks you in and doesn't let you go until Joe Pesci fires at the screen in an iconic homage to *The Great Train Robbery*.

In other words, *GoodFellas* casts a vivid spell because it combines famously intricate camerawork, ruthlessly efficient editing, and a deftly chosen pop soundtrack to create a visceral atmosphere. Martin Scorsese's brilliant selection of vintage tunes punctuate nearly every scene in a technique that has been dubbed "needle-dropping," which only makes his cinematic world easier to get lost in. This

is why I have included “music cues” in nearly every screenplay I’ve written between the ages of fifteen and twenty-six.

This is just one of the examples of how movies themselves constantly inspire choices I make in my writing. Since I have been fortunate enough to have a relatively untroubled, normal life that would make a horribly tedious movie, I rarely draw directly from my own experiences. During my earliest forays into screenwriting in high school, I followed the maxim “write what you know” a bit too closely, writing tepid, thinly veiled roman a clefs about being a California misfit in rural northern Wisconsin.

My family moved to Hurley, a once-bustling mining town that thrived during the heyday of Al Capone, when I was thirteen. Initially I thought my interest in cinema would wane the further I got away from Hollywood; instead, it intensified. As my peers shunned me for being a fish out of water, I spent a lot of time at home devouring every movie I could get my hands on. I may have been a casual young movie buff when I left California, but after less than a year in Wisconsin, I became more knowledgeable about film than anyone I had yet met. From that point on, I was the neighborhood movie buff who saw almost everything.

This naturally led to writing movie reviews as a hobby, and having been inspired by high-profile journalists like Roger Ebert, I decided I wanted to be a film critic. I wrote for the high school paper, then extensively for *The Daily Cardinal* at UW-Madison (where I was lucky enough to interview Ebert at the Wisconsin Film Festival). My interest in screenwriting was secondary to my all-consuming passion

for film, and my first aforementioned screenplays were not really serious undertakings. Even when I took two screenwriting classes as an undergraduate, it was more about testing the waters than anything. I knew I could write about film, but by then film criticism had become practically extinct as a profession, so I tried to actually write films.

After graduating from UW-Madison with a journalism degree I would never put to use, I worked as a manager of an art-house movie theater and wrote scripts on the side. My first two screenplays, *The Broken Silence* and *Man in the Booth*, represented a step forward largely because they featured protagonists nothing like me. Instead of writing myself into those stories, I chose to set them in locations I was familiar with: *The Broken Silence* shuttles back and forth between Hurley and Chicago while *Man in the Booth* is set almost entirely in an antique movie theater on State Street in Madison. In many ways, this is where I finally understood what “write what you know” means – not to literally regurgitate my life on paper, but to use my own experiences to hopefully render a story more authentic.

But as much as I love the Midwest, it is simply not the place to be if you are a budding screenwriter. In 2008, I moved with a close friend and frequent collaborator of mine to Austin because of its reputation as the “independent Hollywood.” After languishing in some office jobs and frequenting the Alamo Drafthouse for a few years, I decided it was time to go back to school. While I had read many of the top screenwriting manuals – Robert McKee’s *Story* and Blake

Snyder's *Save the Cat* among them – I wanted to receive first-hand academic instruction.

When I applied to the University of Texas – Austin, I also applied for the Michener Center Fellowship. Since I had not written a full screenplay in two years, I elected to give myself an assignment to dust the rust off: adapt Stephen King's *Rose Madder* in a month as an audition piece. *Rose Madder* is one of King's least-loved novels; a tawdry potboiler about a psychotic cop who chases his battered wife across the country after she finally leaves him. I renamed it *Up Close*, added a backstory that attempted to better explain why the female protagonist stayed with such a monstrous person for so long, and jettisoned all of the wonky supernatural elements that crop up in the third act. To my surprise and delight, quickly writing something like a "hired gun" came naturally to me, and while the script ultimately did not get me admitted into the Michener Center, I knew I was truly capable of being a screenwriter.

The first screenplay I worked on in graduate school was a zany but pitch-black horror comedy titled *Hooverville*. In its early stages, *Hooverville* was a grim genre exercise with an overpoweringly glum tone; it takes place almost exclusively within a California shantytown during the Great Depression, and a Grim Reaper-esque slasher killer is savagely murdering all of the migrants. My first "aha" moment came when I realized how much better this would work if I merely shifted the tone to absurdist comedy. The second draft of *Hooverville*, completed during my second semester, is by far my favorite of my screenplays because it represents the purest

expression of my sensibilities – from the period setting to the persistently sardonic tone to the flamboyantly staged sequences of ultraviolence.

While *Hooverville* is my calling card and I have boundless affection for it, it is far from being universally accessible. Dark comedy is by nature divisive and often off-putting, but from writing *Hooverville* I learned I had an affinity for it that I could not ignore. As I was rewriting *Hooverville*, I also worked on an aggressively irreverent spec for the show *Archer* as well as a salty “drama” pilot about pirates during the “Golden Age of Piracy.” As an extracurricular project, a classmate and I co-wrote a darkly funny “tundra noir”/“Midwestern” set at a quaint tourist trap in, you guessed it, northern Wisconsin. By the time I started tinkering with a zombie comedy, it had become clear my forte involved combining violence and humor.

This is where *Bleeding Hearts* comes in. The script began life as a logline inspired by a title one of my collaborators came up with: *Here Comes the Bribe*. Wheels started to spin, and I thought this might be a great opportunity to stretch myself and work in a new genre. Just working with the title, I knew it probably had to either involve a wedding or at least be a romantic comedy, and corruption needed to play an integral role. During the summer, as that collaborator and I co-wrote a one-man army action script that hearkened back to boyhood favorites like *Commando*, I kept that title on the backburner.

When my third semester started, I included a logline for an “untitled political romantic comedy.” The title had fallen by the wayside, but the concept I wanted to pitch felt fresh, fun, and promising. Little did I know it would eventually mature into

a mediocre, sprawling, atonal mess that would challenge me more than any other writing assignment I have ever had. The following chapters tell the story of how that lackluster draft came to fruition, how significant changes led to an improved but still distressingly problematic script, and how *Bleeding Hearts* taught me more about myself as a screenwriter than anything else.

Chapter 2: Tortured Beginnings and a “Sex Change Operation”

In its earliest iteration, *Bleeding Hearts* was pitched as *The American President* meets *The Apartment* meets *Almost Famous*. The main character was envisioned as a “masterful spin doctor” for a popular Presidential candidate who would fall in love with his boss’ mistress while on the campaign trail. This experience would inevitably lead to his disillusionment with his boss and job, so I saw him as a less obsequious, more cunning version of C.C. Baxter. In a nutshell, this premise had the protagonist from *The Apartment*, the politics of *The American President*, and the road trip setting of *Almost Famous*.

After preparing for the early treatment and minute-by-minute breakdown by watching the aforementioned films plus *Wag the Dog*, I decided to lose the spin doctor element. In order for there to be a spin doctor, some sort of scandal needed to happen promptly within the first ten pages or so, and that was not the direction I wanted the plot to go in. However, now that my lead was not a spin doctor, I did not have a firm grasp on what he should be.

The first character I created was Phil Anderson, who I always pictured being played by John Slattery of *Mad Men* fame. In look and behavior, he was always supposed to be a Bill Clinton type. At this early stage, Phil was careless but sympathetic; his problems with infidelity were meant to be all the more frustrating because he was so clearly the superior candidate. In order to establish this, I made his opponent a raving lunatic that nobody sane would vote for: the homophobic, secretly gay, Tea Party nominee Buddy Duke. The mistress character materialized

after Duke, and I whimsically chose to make her French-Cajun in a bid for unconventionality (and also because I find women with French accents beguiling). A cast of colorful characters was starting to form, but I still did not know who exactly my leading man was.

After scanning through my handy list of unique names and surnames – all culled from when I processed felons' records for the Travis County District Attorney – I gave my protagonist a name: Steve Bennett. Second, I gave him a job: campaign manager. His dramatic dilemma would focus on his desire for Camille conflicting with his desire for Phil to beat Duke in the election. Even though I did not have a clear idea of who Steve was yet, I started connecting the dots of the plot.

The plot was constructed around two strong opinions of mine that would dovetail at the climax – we need to allow gay people to get married, and we should allow the third party candidate to debate. Inserting these characters and situations into a traditional rom-com structure led to a rather wild conclusion that was purposefully intended to subvert expectations. Steve would make the choice to abandon dignity and declare his love publicly for Camille at the final debate, causing the not-quite-heartless Duke to melt and admit his torrid affair with his handsome young running mate. Due to two unfortunately timed sex scandals, the American people would be forced to pick the independent candidate for the first time ever.

Duke's gay reveal and the independent candidate's victory were what I clung to the hardest, even though feedback indicated they were a tad too unbelievable. I kept them in the revised treatment and focused more on giving Steve an active role.

The first improvement to tighten the plot involved Steve covering for Phil by pretending that Camille was his girlfriend; most importantly, this gave them a reason to spend more time together. This treatment was also where I solidified the story importance of the “Town Hall Debate” that would take place right before Election Day so that whatever climactic shenanigans occurred would be fresh in voters’ minds.

Most everything stayed intact from the revised treatment to the first outline, but the Meet Cute was altered so Steve would confidently hit on Camille, get rejected, and then subsequently discover her in bed with Phil. I knew I still had to streamline the plot and flesh out Steve, but I felt like this was ready to go. After changing Steve to a bumbling intern who would work his way up the political ladder, I wrote the first eleven pages.

Looking back at those very first eleven pages, it is surprising how many individual lines and moments remained intact even through the most recent draft. It was in these pages where I first created Jackie Forsythe, the ultra-snippy campaign manager who orders Steve to retrieve Phil’s cell phone from his motel room before a debate. Of course, this is where Steve walks in on Phil and Camille, which then leads to Phil giving him a job offer to keep him quiet.

In response to these pages, the common consensus was that Steve was too bumbling and the discovery of Phil’s affair with Camille was too rushed. In the revised pages, Steve is depicted as a competent intern who respects Phil so much he gets himself fired in covering up the true reason behind Phil’s tardiness. Phil

subsequently tracks him down at his motel room and offers him a paying staff position.

For the next revised set of opening pages, I changed Steve's name to Roger and made him younger (early 20s) and more wholesome and earnest. If I had someone like Joseph Gordon-Levitt or Ryan Gosling in mind before, I was now visualizing Michael Cera or Jesse Eisenberg. I also added a few other harried interns – Sebastian and Jessica, the latter of whom previously existed as “Weepy Intern” – for Roger to play off at the bar after they all get fired. If I had continued down this route, these pages would have been closest to the tone I wanted.

Up until this point, I felt satisfied with the direction this script was going, but then I started to read more about an upcoming George Clooney film called *Ides of March*. Although I knew it was a somber drama, I grew concerned about the superficial similarities between it and *Bleeding Hearts*. Despite support and reassurance from my workshop, I panicked and repeatedly tried to scrap the project altogether. Beyond *Ides of March*, I also discovered that there was a Russell Brand project in development titled *The President Stole My Girlfriend* (which, coincidentally, is a terrific script I recently read while interning at Branded Films). All hope seemed lost and I focused most of my attention on hurriedly jumping onto another project. At this point, however, it was nearing the halfway mark of the semester and that just was not a feasible option.

A decision had to be made: do I forge ahead with a script that is arguably too similar to two mainstream properties, or do I uproot the foundation and start from

the ground up? How could I shake up the story elements to guarantee this would easily distinguish itself from similar premises?

I decided to emulate the strategy the filmmakers of *Salt* took when Tom Cruise dropped out of the title role: I just gave the candidate a “sex change operation.” That is how Barbara Anderson was born.

Chapter 3: Experimentation and Evolution

Barbara Anderson was never supposed to be a cure-all for the story's problems, but I had no idea how much she would complicate it. The romantic focus shifted from Steve and Camille to Steve and Barbara, an affair that would be spurred by Phil's resurgent infidelity, and this created a whole new set of problems. Now *Bleeding Hearts* was no longer merely about politics but *gender politics*, a minefield of a subject that I traipsed into too casually. As I learned the hard way, telling the lighthearted story of a *female* Presidential candidate's affair with a campaign staffer is inherently challenging because it bites off more than this usually frivolous genre can chew.

Thanks to this new direction, I wondered if this was still fit to be a traditional romantic comedy. In fact, the newly charged subject matter allowed me to broaden my conception of the piece; this was not even required to be a romance anymore. Before writing any new pages, I scribbled down nearly a dozen alternate plotlines:

What if Phil tried to have Steve killed after he discovered the affair? That kind of darkly comic scenario would be well within my wheelhouse. What if I eliminated Steve all together and focused solely on Barbara's campaign and how Phil's sleazy behavior perpetually jeopardized it? That would have been intriguing but too far away from the original concept. What if Steve and Barbara uncovered the nefarious truth that Phil was a drug-dealing gangster who... no, that one I chalked up to watching too much *Breaking Bad*.

When it finally came down to it, I elected to keep it a love story peppered with many of the older details (Buddy Duke, the independent candidate winning, etc.). I also chose to inject a decidedly cynical satirical tone throughout, and in order to make Steve confident, I wrote his character to be as cocky as humanly possible. Lastly, I changed his name to Stan as one last way to distance the story from *Ides of March*, as Ryan Gosling's character is named Stephen.

Now that he is a mouthy and (supposedly) charming wheeler and dealer, I felt that Stan was also a casual womanizer who would abandon his slick ways after falling for Barbara. The beginning of *True Romance* heavily influenced the opening scene of this draft, and I sought to dramatize the flipside: if Christian Slater failed to pick up a girl at the bar, the newly arrogant Stan Bennett would have no trouble initiating a one night stand. It also gave me an easy opportunity to work in exposition, as Stan exhibited his charm and political know-how by explaining who the candidates are to an apathetic barfly.

The table was now set, and I could move on to Stan's discovery of Phil and Camille's affair. For the sheer, highly inexplicable reason that it could potentially set up a reference to the classic Dolly Parton song, I renamed the mistress Jolene. The most striking difference in this version was that Stan unapologetically blackmails Phil into giving him a paying position on the campaign. I felt like this made him more active and not as reactionary as he was in the previous pages, where he had too much of an "aw shucks" attitude about the whole thing. The words "aw shucks" would not be in this Stan Bennett's vocabulary.

As a lippy ladder climber, Stan needed to face some opposition on his way to inevitably becoming press secretary, and I did not want to remove Jackie from the story too early. This necessitated the creation of Ronald Poe, a slimy longtime Anderson press secretary whose lukewarm speeches were slowly sinking Barbara's credibility. Once Stan worms his way onto the staff and catches wind of Ronald's latest speech, he bluntly criticizes it to Barbara and sends her a different version. This insubordination gets him "unceremoniously shitcanned," leading to yet another scene where he picks up a girl at a bar while drowning his sorrows. Much to his drunken surprise, Barbara had switched to his speech after the first few lines and was better received than ever before. She brings Stan back in to work with Ronald and Jackie, but Ronald has a meltdown and quits after giving a desperate "him or me?" ultimatum. Theoretically, this was a good way to move Stan up the ranks without it seeming too far-fetched.

Severe problems started to crop up during the writing of the second act, so I began to treat this rough draft as a space for experimentation. Since I did not quite know how Stan's input would help Barbara's campaign or how everything would build to the third act, I wrote very loose scenes. In an attempt to learn what these characters were about, I let them roam as free as I could without derailing the general plot.

This led to some truly strange moments, such as a bizarre running joke about a speedy hotel elevator that qualifies as one of the more head-scratching things I've ever put in a screenplay. Similarly, Barbara and Stan's banter during their first night

together is the very definition of placeholder material – they spend upwards of five pages conversing about movies like *Howard the Duck*. The story started to click for me after Barbara and Stan finally slept together; their romance would need to blossom if only so it could be thwarted in time for the second act break.

In preparing for the second act break, I discovered that Phil was going to turn into more of an out-and-out villain that I had planned in previous versions. Then I had a stray idea that Ronald must have been a private investigator before working on the various Anderson campaigns, and the pieces seemed to fit snugly: Phil would hire Ronald to acquire proof of Barbara and Stan’s affair so he could force her to choose him as her running mate. This move would ruin all of her momentum so far and bring the race with Duke to a dead heat. Now that I was running full speed ahead with the sex tape MacGuffin, I figured Duke would get his hateful mitts on it and seek to humiliate Barbara during the final debate. The third act is absurd and contrived but energetic and more in line with traditional rom-com plotting, and it still allowed me to keep my cherished “Duke is homophobic because he’s gay” revelation.

By the time I finished the first draft, what was once a slight romantic comedy had blown up into a bloated, schizophrenic epic that did not know what it was trying to say or what it wanted to accomplish. While I was glad to complete such a challenging assignment, I consider the resulting 145 pages a pitiful display of discordance and mediocrity. The first draft of *Bleeding Hearts* is, without a doubt, the weakest script I have ever written.

Chapter 4: Salvaging and Reflecting

As soon as I wrote FADE OUT on page 145, I intended to wash my hands of this wretched script and move on to greener pastures. I finished a strong second draft of my one-man army script with my writing partner and began researching for what was then my dream project: a rollicking portrait of young Andrew Jackson during his “shitkicker” years as a legendary ruffian and duelist. This was by far the most ambitious project I had ever undertaken, so I spent months poring over Jackson biographies and other relevant historical accounts. The Jackson script underwent plenty of changes and presented its own set of distinct challenges, but it felt like a breeze after the *Bleeding Hearts* debacle.

However, as the graduate program started to wind down, I felt an unexplainable urge to revisit *Bleeding Hearts*. Between the Andrew Jackson script and two other television projects I completed on the side, I was once again firmly entrenched in my comfort zone, and time away from *Bleeding Hearts* eventually quelled my hatred for it. When it came time to pick a script to rewrite, I felt *Hooverville* was in decent shape and the Jackson script was too fresh to immediately revisit. If I really wanted to push myself, revising *Bleeding Hearts* was the way to go.

My disdain for the first draft was validated when I showed it to a trusted collaborator and he could not make it past the first act. When I reread it, I felt it contained some winning moments and choice lines, but as a whole was irredeemably sloppy. The first instinct I had was to ditch the entire thing and essentially write a whole new story with some of the same characters.

Rereading the script also clued me in on an elusive truth: I expressed more affection for the supporting characters than the leads. Whereas Barbara comes off as an unintentionally ditzy question mark and Stan is a nearly insufferable sleazebag; Duke, Ronald, and Jackie had outsized personalities that were a blast to write. Duke was portrayed as a sinister person more akin to a Bond villain or Hans Gruber in *Die Hard*, complete with a lair pointedly located inside a tea warehouse. I always pictured a Steve Buscemi or David Paymer type in the Ronald role, so his dialogue came more naturally to me than most of the other characters'.

Jackie, on the other hand, was loosely based on a petite, fiery friend of mine who lacks a filter and tends to say whatever is on her mind regardless of decorum. With that in mind, I wrote what was overall my favorite scene in the entire first draft: Jackie chews out Stan for his manipulative ladder climbing while a pesky barfly persistently tries to hit on her. She ignores him until it is nearly physically impossible, but then instead of rejecting him outright, she cuts to the chase and initiates a one night stand in a very curt, almost businesslike manner. Unfortunately, while this provided an amusing snapshot of her character, this scene also had nothing to do with anything. Like plenty of other isolated moments I favor, it feels disconnected from the main narrative and thus devoid of purpose or significance.

Ironically, my least favorite scene of the script – and possibly the most misguided scene I have ever written in anything – is crucial to the plot. After Ronald dramatically quits, Jackie and Barbara task Stan with coming up with a new game plan. While the dialogue in the scene has a nice rhythm to it, the content is woeful

and hideously offensive; essentially, Stan proves his worth to the campaign by noting how ugly and unattractive most women in politics are. Barbara and others call Stan out on this during the scene, but the narrative trajectory implies he is correct in this opinion – even when he debuts a long lost photograph of young Barbara in a bikini. This was an attempt to be edgy and reaffirm Stan’s almost supernatural cockiness, but it understandably rubbed people the wrong way.

That scene also provides an example of the extreme tonal issues that plagued the first draft. It is barely possible that a scene like that could work in a rude, scathing satire with something larger to say, but it has absolutely no business being in a romantic comedy. A common observation made by my professor and peers was that this draft did not remotely feel like a romantic comedy until nearly halfway through.

But even after the halfway point, *Bleeding Hearts* is a problematic romantic comedy because it is one of the angriest scripts I have ever penned. Nearly every character shouts, cusses like a sailor, and treats peers and superiors alike with barely disguised contempt. This includes Barbara, who at one critical juncture tries to win her way into the audience’s heart by admitting her affection for torture porn films. It does not require a lot of in-depth analysis to understand why that fails completely.

Once again, I attempted to force something edgy into the script and it fell sickeningly flat. Conversely, the “Duke is gay” reveal was funny enough for me to latch onto, but it comes out of nowhere and feels quite dated. I kept it as long as I did

because it tied so neatly into the gay marriage debate, which I wanted to forefront as the chief issue in the campaign (a strategy inspired by *The American President* and how the green energy initiative is the only specific issue discussed).

While it is true that political screenplays will inevitably be opinionated, the first draft of *Bleeding Hearts* is aggressively in-your-face about championing specifically liberal values. In some ways, this is a long-winded attack piece on the hypocrisy and lunacy of the Republican party in America. Here is the problem with that: many good, upstanding people in this country are Republicans who do not hate gay people or belong to the Tea Party (my parents included), but this script essentially condemns all of them. Obviously, that is not an effective way to reach the widest possible audience.

Having all of that in mind, I knew I had my work cut out for me. I had no clear idea what the second incarnation of *Bleeding Hearts* would turn out to be, but I wanted to approach it with an open mind and a positive attitude. However, I was more than willing to chuck the whole thing if necessary.

Chapter 5: Rebuilding and Revising

Going into my thesis committee meeting, I was expecting to overhaul the story and write something more reminiscent of this idea when it was still called *Here Comes the Bribe*. For years I have wanted to write a stripped-down, minimalist road movie that primarily centers on the chemistry between a male and female lead. I thought about returning to the dynamic between *Steve* and *Camille*: the first act would set up the burgeoning sex scandal, and the second act would consist entirely of Steve keeping Camille out of the spotlight until, inevitably, they would team up to undermine Phil's campaign.

To my surprise, my thesis committee saw some potential in the first draft as it was. They advised me to work with what I already had instead of starting a page one rewrite, stating that this could function in some form as a successful and broadly appealing rom-com. Key to the revision was the idea that the second draft should be more about *politicians* than actual politics. I was always attached to the notion that politicians are flawed people held to an impossible standard, and in downplaying the politics in favor of juicy interpersonal drama, I thought I would finally get a handle on my lead characters.

The general notes on Stan and Barbara indicated that he needed to be likeable instead of abrasively cocky while she needed to be funnier, livelier, and more "presidential." The rewrite would also require their romantic connection to be established earlier, and it was suggested that each be a few years older than in the first draft. In this first draft, I visualized Ryan Gosling and Catherine Zeta-Jones in

the lead roles; for the second draft, I pictured Nathan Fillion and Sandra Bullock. The latter pair is both closer in age and attractive without looking too distractingly perfect like the former. More to the point, Bullock has a refreshing girl-next-door quality about her that I found much more appropriate for Barbara than Zeta-Jones' palpable glamour.

Barbara and Stan's backstories needed to be fleshed out as well since their pasts are seldom alluded to in the first draft. I immediately took to the idea that they both had daughters and could bond in some way over their similar experiences. Instead of repeatedly hitting on girls at the bar, I wanted Stan to start out with a girlfriend who would leave him because of his devotion to Barbara's campaign. Since one of the few well-received bits in the first draft involved Barbara and Phil's cheesy self-help book, I decided to expand its importance and show the genesis of the idea. Lastly, I wanted Phil to have actually served a term as President before a sex scandal drove him out of office and almost ruined his marriage.

Armed with solid advice and a better sense of direction, I scribbled endless notes in preparation for the second draft. The hardest part initially was reconceptualizing the opening sequence. I revisited James L. Brooks' wonderful *Broadcast News* and observed how effectively he introduces the three primary characters during childhood. For weeks, I wanted to emulate this with a classroom scene where ten-year-old Barbara would read an essay expressing her dream to become the first female President of the United States. Her teacher and/or classmates would snicker and demean her dream as unrealistic, and before

slamming to the opening credits, someone would suggest she try to become an actress instead.

Personally, I love that opening even though I ultimately chose to discard it. While it may be a bit too close to the opening scene of Shane Black's *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* ("I wanna be an actress!"), it immediately introduces the theme of performance/role playing and makes Barbara very relatable. However, now that Phil was President for four years, it was crucial to at least briefly depict that time period instead of constantly, awkwardly referencing it later. Additionally, I did not want to jump ahead in time twice in the first ten pages; I figured this would get things off to a shaky start and feel instantly episodic.

Since I knew I was building to a final scene where Barbara was being inaugurated, I decided to begin with Phil's concession speech for structural symmetry. This would get the exposition out of the road and introduce the principle characters in an organic way. Most importantly, I needed to write a Meet Cute for Barbara and Stan; after nixing some more slapstick-driven scenarios, I opted to have Stan accidentally walk in on Barbara exercising to a corny DVD. The song she rocks out to is Patty Smyth's "The Warrior," which gains narrative importance during the second half of the script. This was influenced by one of my favorite moments in *Love Actually* when Hugh Grant's Prime Minister gets seen enthusiastically dancing to an upbeat pop tune, and I felt like this set an appropriate tone early on.

As I reconstructed the first act, I carefully layered in lines and moments from the first draft that felt commensurate with the new tone. Stan's discovery of Phil and

Jolene was always fundamentally comic in nature, so the only thing that changed was how Stan responded to it: instead of shaking Phil down, this Stan would prefer to move on and forget about what he just saw. Even when Phil offers him a position on the speechwriting staff, he refuses because he wants to earn such a promotion “legitimately.” Second draft Stan is as honorable and polite as first draft Stan was sneaky and coarse.

First draft Stan would presumably have been a bad father if he had a daughter, but second draft Stan loves and respects his teenaged daughter. The character of Emily Bennett is easily the most important new character, and I wanted to portray her as a troubled teen reeling from her mother’s abandonment. She really started to come alive in my mind, though, when I read a random news story about a CBS pilot that got axed for ripping off *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Thanks to the ubiquity of those books and the recent David Fincher adaptation, the Goth girl who is also a brilliant hacker has become a common cliché. I thought it would be thematically fitting if people continually assumed Emily was savvy with computers simply because of her appearance. Pairing this kind of recurring minor annoyance with Barbara’s ongoing struggle to sculpt her own identity for voters would hypothetically help unify the second draft.

Building on this, I strove to include as many references to acting, performing, and playing different characters as I could without it feeling too heavy-handed. In a way, this draft is as much about Barbara struggling to reveal her true self to the American people as it is about her courtship with Stan. Most of the same beats from

the second act of the first draft are replicated in the second draft, but completely eliminating Duke and his cohorts allowed for more breathing room. Also, since Phil's affair does not go public in this draft, more time was available to devote to both Barbara's campaign and relationship with Stan.

Two of the biggest changes involve the goings-on inside and around the Paradise Lounge, the glorious Madison dive bar I have written into every version of this story. This is the kind of dimly lit nook where even a Presidential candidate could feasibly hide out, and it seemed to work as the unlikely central locale of Barbara and Stan's relationship. Since Barbara should still be safe enough to disguise herself while out in public – particularly when she is with her handsome press secretary – I thought she would quirkily doll herself up as a “Guidette” because that is a “character” at the farthest end of the spectrum from a respectable politician. Having her get into a small altercation with a legitimate Guidette, who would later come back to the Paradise Lounge dressed as Barbara for Halloween, felt like a fun and somewhat unexpected way to underscore the performance/identity themes.

This was also the reasoning behind the blackout and subsequent hacker bluff by Emily during the climax, although this aspect of the rewrite struck me as problematic from the outset. The third act of *Bleeding Hearts* was always a problem spot because I had to resolve all of the outlandish storylines at play with a modicum of plausibility. Unfortunately, the blackout and how it plays into Emily's bluff makes

about as much sense as Duke and Ellington mercurially blowing their victory by revealing their secret relationship in the other drafts.

Overall, the rewrite felt like an improvement that nonetheless sprouted new problems and concerns. Despite this being a big, not necessarily realistic “movie-movie,” both drafts of *Bleeding Hearts* ask readers to suspend their disbelief in almost every scene. Barbara’s relationship with Stan is sweeter and slightly more compelling in the second draft, but their interactions lack tension. Due to my removal of the R-rated profanity and vulgarity, this draft feels much closer to a marketable PG-13 rom-com. I also excised most of the overt soapboxing from the first draft and avoided criticizing Republicans; oddly enough, the second draft’s message that strictly partisan politics are limited and even damaging to America is a more accurate reflection of my general opinion on politics.

As flawed as it is, I am proud of the second draft. I believe I did the best job I could with this material, which is frankly not for me. As interested as I am in politics, I do not possess the requisite knowledge that would imbue my fictionalized political climate with authenticity. But perhaps most critically, I was never able to fall in love with Barbara or Stan as characters.

Chapter 6: Future Directions and Lessons Learned

In order to write a successful screenplay, you have to genuinely love your characters. This is an important lesson I frequently forget, and the process of revising *Bleeding Hearts* gave me quite a jarring reminder. I could not bring myself to care about these characters because I could not relate to them on a core level, so very little of myself found its way into either Stan or Barbara. Shortly into the writing process, I resisted spending time with them and found more creative fulfillment in fiddling with the structure and taking easy potshots at closed-minded Republicans.

After two middling drafts, I may not return to *Bleeding Hearts*, but if I do, I will spend the majority of my preparation pinpointing what it is about Stan or Barbara that I find appealing enough to justify spending the time recounting their tale. It is telling that Stan went from a boorish lout to a spineless blank between drafts; by bypassing any sort of middle ground in his characterization, I lazily robbed myself of the opportunity to get to know him. As for Barbara, I have no idea how to make her more “presidential” because, when it comes down to it, I cannot relate to anyone who can function at the most elite level of politics. In other words, I would make the world’s worst politician, so maybe it should not be surprising that I do not know how to write one convincingly.

Actually, that is not entirely true – I can competently write *evil* politicians because I believe politics are dirty and manipulative on a basic level. As I was rewriting *Bleeding Hearts* this summer, I also co-wrote a television pilot about a

troubled oil boomtown in North Dakota and relished writing any scene involving the corrupt, greedy Mayor. Even in the infinitely more sanitized second draft of *Bleeding Hearts*, my utter disgust with politics is readily apparent.

That is why, in addition to the many practical lessons I learned about characterization, restructuring, experimentation, and everything else, *Bleeding Hearts* was the script that uncovered the most common thread in my writing. From *Hooverville* onward, most of my screenplays and teleplays function as satirical commentaries on America. As silly and sarcastic as it is, *Hooverville* is at its heart an exploration of contemporary class warfare through the prism of the Great Depression. My Andrew Jackson script sought to tell the story of a man who embodied and personified both the best and worst qualities of America. I have an undeniable predilection for period pieces because they allow me to analyze and criticize the present day in an indirect way.

As it is one of the few contemporary screenplays I have written, *Bleeding Hearts* directly criticizes the present political climate but lacks grace in its approach. I am not a very subtle writer – my work tends to be loud, visceral, and provocative by and large – so it is beneficial for me to couch my scathing criticisms within a metaphorical or allegorical framework. By that rationale, a potential third draft of *Bleeding Hearts* could disparage political ruthlessness by making Phil willing to kill Barbara in order to pull a Grover Cleveland and receive a nonconsecutive term as President. Perhaps framing the critique within that kind of heightened, hyper-pulpy context could prove to be a solid approach.

A common saying goes that far more wisdom is gained from failure than success, and that certainly applies to my experience with *Bleeding Hearts*. I could have jumped ship and worked on an easier project, but then I would not have attained this invaluable knowledge about my strengths and limitations as a writer. *Bleeding Hearts* may currently be the redheaded stepchild in my screenwriting portfolio, but it imparted lessons that will assist me throughout my writing career.

Appendix A: Loglines

The Comeback (Tentative Title)

An aging, fading superstar actress retreats to her secluded cottage, where she saves the life of a lost skier about to freeze to death. The story revives (positive) media interest in the actress, especially when she begins a fairytale romance with the handsome skier, but her personal and professional comeback start to unravel the more she learns about her new lover's dark past. The dark version of *Notting Hill*.

Albatross (Tentative Title)

An unhappily married woman pregnant with her lover's baby travels cross-country with her lover to a state where she can get an abortion, even though she's uncertain if she wants to go through with it.

Untitled Political Romantic Comedy

The masterful young spin doctor for a popular Presidential candidate falls in love with the candidate's mistress while on the campaign trail and becomes disillusioned with his job and boss in the process. *The American President* meets *The Apartment* meets *Almost Famous*.

The Beard (Tentative Title)

A single gal agrees to marry her longtime gay friend, a man in the public eye (politician, athlete, etc.) who believes that coming out will ruin his career. But when she falls in love for real, she must decide between her husband's reputation and her own happiness.

Knife Fight Island

A young slacker finds himself sucked through a time warp and marooned on Knife Fight Island, a strange otherworldly island in which random people from all different time periods are forced to fight each other in a deadly knife fight tournament. Warriors from other time periods help train him to become a skilled knife fighter in his own right, and he rises in the ranks to curry favor with the villainous island owner and find a way to escape. *Enter the Dragon* meets *Fight Club* meets *Gladiator* meets *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*.

Untitled Moody Mystery Drama/Thriller

An acclaimed independent film contains an explicitly violent, realistic murder as its centerpiece. A private investigator uncovers the bizarre backstory behind the making of the film and tries to prove that the murder was real.

Old Hickory

A sprawling biopic of Andrew Jackson – following him from his humble beginnings to fame and success as a military leader in the War of 1812 and, ultimately, to his controversial two-term presidency in the 1820s and 30s. (Could either be a “whole life” biopic or a *The Aviator*-style 10 or 20-year excerpt from his life)

Appendix B: First Minute by Minute Outline

5 Minutes

Using specific key phrases recommended by Steve, Phil Anderson surprises all by coming second in a state primary (thus making him a serious contender for the party nomination).

10 Minutes

Steve meets Camille Ledoux, Phil's new, sexy Cajun mistress.

17 Minute Point

Steve tries to persuade Phil to break it off with Camille in light of the intensified scrutiny he faces in upcoming weeks; but Phil's in love, and Steve will have to conceal the secret relationship.

30 Minute Point

Information about Camille (or at least the mere information that Phil has a mistress) gets leaked to the press. Phil emphatically denies any involvement, but the can of worms has been opened.

45 Minutes

Phil secures the Democratic party nomination.

60 Minutes

When Phil's wife shows up unannounced at a campaign rally, a distraught Camille runs off and threatens to confirm the story to the press. Steve is sent to track her down and "guard" her until she calms down. They grudgingly get to know each other.

75 Minutes

Phil has enough support among moderate Republicans and independents to put him well over his opponent – he is well on his way to becoming the next President.

90 Minutes

Just as Steve starts making headway, Phil makes a power play and promises Camille he will divorce his wife as soon as he wins the Presidency.

Appendix C: First Treatment

Act One

STEVE BENNETT (late 20s) is a young, ace campaign manager for popular Governor PHIL ANDERSON (50s) – a charming, popular silver fox type (think John Slattery or Ted Danson) running for President. Cocky and whip-smart, Steve’s gift for spin has bolstered Phil’s political career; and while Phil is considered a dark horse even among the Democratic nominees, Steve’s promising strategies may just give him a shot. Early on, Phil surprises everyone by placing second in a crucial primary, thanks to Steve’s advice.

Just prior to the state primary elections and caucuses, Steve meets Phil’s latest mistress, a sexy French-Cajun musician named CAMILLE LEDOUX (late 20s/early 30s). He’s attracted to her – who wouldn’t be? – but recognizes the trouble and stress she is going to bring to his job. Phil insists it’s a temporary affair, but Steve continues to worry (“James Carville was a Cajun who got a President elected. Camille LeDoux is a Cajun who will destroy any chance you have of becoming President.”).

On the campaign trail, Steve reluctantly helps Phil conduct his clandestine affair – carefully coordinating Camille’s visits with those of his wife LONI (who doesn’t resemble the other “famous” Loni Anderson). While he doesn’t enjoy this, Steve sees that Camille has a positive effect on Phil – making him more vigorous and energetic during debates etc. than he’s ever been before.

Inevitable trouble arrives when someone leaks a story about Phil having a mistress (though they do not know her identity yet). Just as Phil was on his way, this story threatens his livelihood, marriage, and the entire campaign.

Act Two

Steve goes into full-spin mode, advising Phil to emphatically deny the “rumor” and pull some public “oh my God, look at how fucking healthy our marriage is” Al/Tipper Gore shit with Loni to deflect the negative publicity. Nonetheless, opponents from both sides launch a barrage of mudslinging character attacks (including someone proposing that he change his name to “Phil-Anderer” – which unfortunately sticks).

Time passes and Phil's relationship with Camille grows more serious. Meanwhile, the Republicans pick BUDDY DUKE (60s) – a borderline-psychotic, union-busting, homophobic Glenn Beck/Michele Bachmann/Scott Walker/Sarah Palin-esque Tea Party piece of shit as their nominee. Unfortunately popular with morons, Duke has a very serious shot of defeating any of the Democrats. He is also one of the major forces behind perpetuating the Phil/mistress rumor.

Things look grim, but Steve's strategies pay off when Phil barely secures the Democratic nomination. Steve is happy, but has a minor panic attack – this is going to be a long, hard road to the White House.

Camille continues to influence Phil, but they see each other less and less due to the increasingly centralized role Loni starts to play in the campaign. Things come to a head at a rally in Madison, Wisconsin (Duke's hometown and thus a crucial spot) when Loni shows up unannounced, unwittingly sabotaging Phil and Camille's planned tryst.

Camille goes all Kate-Hudson-in-*Almost-Famous* and has a meltdown. She behaves erratically and threatens to confirm the affair to the press, prompting Phil to send Steve to track her down and "guard" her until she comes to her senses.

Phil does his best to keep Camille "off the grid" ("no texting, emailing, tweeting, Facebooking, digging, or pinging) and essentially babysits her for an extended period of time. They resent each other, but slowly begin opening up and connecting. Steve doesn't realize it yet – but he's falling in love with this troublemaker.

Phil and Duke start their debates. Since Phil is charming and Duke comes off like the wild-eyed dipshit he is, Phil is on his way to the White House. Duke's mudslinging attempts backfire (even after he identifies Camille as the mistress), and Phil's approval rating skyrockets.

By now, more people associate Phil with his nickname "the Warrior" (thanks to Steve's suggested use of Patty Smyth's "Warrior" as his theme song, which he cheesily embraces at rallies with an imaginary six-shooter, etc.) than as the "Phil-Anderer." As Phil now rarely sees Camille, Steve builds a tentative platonic relationship with her and things seem headed in the romantic direction.

Just as Steve starts making headway with Camille, Phil makes a power play and promises her he will divorce his wife as soon as he wins the election (even though he admits to Steve that this won't actually happen). As the eve of the election approaches and Phil's numbers seem undefeatable, Steve finds himself at his lowest even as his professional career is at its peak.

Act Three

Disillusioned and depressed, Steve is in a hopeless situation: he can either sit helplessly and watch as Phil wins the election and Camille's heart (sorry for that), or he can declare his feelings and allow a complete nutjob to run the country for at least four years. Decisions, decisions.

At a suggested 4th town hall debate (or something similar that makes more sense) on November 1st, Phil gets asked a question about Camille and coolly denies the relationship. Disgusted and fed up, Steve interrupts the debate to do the whole love-over-dignity big rom-com speech in which he declares his love for Camille and tells her Phil is putting her on.

This spectacle predictably becomes a media sensation, and Duke looks poised to win and ruin the country. But Steve's heart-on-the-sleeve romanticism gets to him as well, and he emotionally admits that he too has a secret lover – his handsome, young, equally homophobic male running mate! They kiss on live TV and effectively ruin their chances of winning as well (the lone PG-13 f-bomb will be Duke saying "Fuck it" right before the smooch).

On November 2nd, America elects the independent candidate (who will probably warrant his/her own subplot in which he/she is repeatedly not allowed to debate) for the first time in history.

Days or weeks later, Phil and Steve have an awkward reconciliation in which Phil reveals that the situation has caused him to change his ways. Steve tells him that Camille has retreated from the public eye and won't return his phone calls. Phil surprises him by saying that he and Camille ended things for good, and tells him where to find her.

Steve finds Camille working in Madison as a lounge singer at the charming dive where they spent time earlier when he "guarded" her. After her set, he approaches her. She is resistant and tries to avoid him at first, but eventually sits and talks with him. The story ends with them starting a tentative relationship.

Appendix D: Revised Treatment

Characters

Steve Bennett (early 20s):

The young, ace campaign manager for Governor Phil Anderson, Steve is cocky, whip-smart, and has a God-given gift for spin. Talented at manipulating people and managing expectations, Steve certainly deserves his prestigious position, though he'll always remain loyal to Phil, who hired him when nobody else would take him seriously. He believes in Phil and truly sees him as being more than a politician, but starts having doubts once Camille enters the picture.

Phil Anderson (50s):

A charming, popular silver fox that has served as Governor of Wisconsin for a number of controversy-free years, Phil seems like a refreshing political candidate. He has a healthy marriage and a strong friendship with Steve that goes beyond their professional connection, and he trusts him with everything. However, he did have a brief fling with Camille before, and seeing her again triggers his lust and causes him to act recklessly and expect Steve to keep it all under control.

Camille LeDoux (late 20s/early 30s):

Sultry, impulsive, and French-Cajun, Camille is a bombshell. She's heard every pick-up line and refuses to fall for any of them, but when they come out of Phil's mouth they sound different. Camille's been drifting from job to job, city to city for some time – only recently settling in Madison, Wisconsin as a lounge singer at a dive bar. When she comes onto the campaign as an intern, she proves capable and savvy at her job, and thinks she may have a place in the political world (not just as a politician's mistress).

Loni Anderson (50s):

Annoyed that she's considered less famous than the "other" Loni Anderson, Loni is an ambitious type who longs to make a difference as First Lady (even though she's indecisive on picking a pet issue to focus on). Things with Phil have been coasting along happily for a while, but now their only child is in college and she's starting to suspect that Phil's fooling around on her. When allegations regarding Camille come out, she doesn't accuse her husband but chooses to strategically involve herself more in his affairs to ferret out the truth (or at least put enough pressure to cause him to end it, whichever comes first).

Buddy Duke (60s):

A nearly cartoonish distilment of all that is wrong with the Republican party, Buddy can be mainly characterized by his rabidly homophobic stance on gay rights and marriage. He won't outright condemn it like Marcus Bachmann, but he champions "pray the gay away" camps and sponsors bills to end gay marriage, etc. Of course, this is just because he's deeply closeted and in love with his handsome young running mate.

Randolph Foley (age: ?):

Still figuring him out: right now, he's a Ross Perot/Ralph Nader/Ron Paul composite, except less crazy. At this point, just imagine him as Milton from *Office Space* (and his right to debate is the stapler).

Phil's Running Mate:

Not sure what his deal is or how crucial a role he will play yet.

Jeff Ellington (late 30s/early 40s):

Young, handsome, homophobic running mate for Duke, he also happens to be his secret lover. His surname provides the reason why some apathetic, jazz-loving voters choose Duke as their nominee ...

Various Campaign Staffers/Interns:

Other people involved in the campaign who will have varying roles of importance. One can include a friend/confidant figure for Steve to talk to. Some could be Camille's fellow female interns.

Act One

STEVE BENNETT walks, talks, and glad-hands with various officials at a major rally for PHIL ANDERSON, a Wisconsin Governor trailing his opponents for the Democratic party nomination for President. Steve consults with Phil and adds some last minute, key phrases to his speech. Phil resists at first but trusts Steve's judgment. Shortly after the speech – which pundits praise as Phil's finest thanks to Steve's additions – Phil narrowly becomes the Democratic nominee for President.

Steve meets CAMILLE LEDOUX, a sexy French-Cajun intern, at a celebratory function and hits on her shamelessly. There's an attraction and she flirts back, but ultimately rebuffs him.

Shortly thereafter, the campaign plane hits the road (or skies) and Phil is more energetic and dynamic than ever. When Steve remarks on the change, Phil laughs it off. Just as Steve starts getting optimistic about the campaign ("we might have a real shot here!"), he learns about a rumored affair between Steve and Camille in a trashy tabloid magazine.

Furious that he had to learn this news from a gossip rag, Steve goes to question Phil about the rumor. In some embarrassing way, Steve discovers Phil and Camille together. She tries to leave, but Steve doesn't let her – he demands answers and enforces a "pow-wow" to determine how to proceed. Despite Steve's exasperated arguments, Phil insists he's in love with Camille and, "by the way, she's coming on the road with us." Steve has a minor panic attack – this is going to be a long, hard road to the White House.

Act Two

Steve goes into full-spin mode, advising Phil to emphatically deny the "rumor" and pull some "oh how I love my wife!" publicity stunts with LONI ANDERSON to deflect the negative press. Nonetheless, the Republican nominee, a charming but homophobic and loony Senator named BUDDY DUKE, launches a barrage of mudslinging character attacks (including the proposal that Phil change his name to "Phil-Anderer," which unfortunately sticks).

Just as things can't seem to get any worse, a legitimate paper publishes photos (non-sexual) of Camille in close proximity to Phil. Steve avoids a potentially damning situation by pretending that Camille is his girlfriend, which works for the time being (though Loni isn't buying it).

Now, Steve's girlfriend cover story allows Phil and Camille to see each other more than ever – leaving Steve relieved professionally but jealous and conflicted personally. His discontentment with the situation grows as he spends some more time with Camille and grudgingly begins to like her, seeing her as more than the bimbo who's making his life difficult. They develop a tentative friendship of sorts.

Thanks to Camille's constant presence, Phil's on a roll now, but Loni catches wind of what's going on and starts playing an increasingly centralized role in the campaign. Things come to a head at a rally in Madison, Wisconsin (Phil's hometown and thus a crucial spot) when Loni shows up unannounced, unwittingly sabotaging Phil and Camille's planned tryst.

Camille, feeling discarded and guilty, has a meltdown and threatens to confirm the affair to the press. Phil sends Steve to track her down and "guard" her until she comes to her senses.

Phil does his best to keep Camille "off the grid" ("no texting, emailing, tweeting, Facebooking, digging, or pinging") and essentially babysits her for an extended period of time. She really resents him at first, but eventually opens up and reveals her past, how she first got started with Phil (falling in love with him before she realized he was married, etc.), and Steve starts to fall for her.

Phil and Duke start their debates (this is where RANDOLPH FOLEY, the independent candidate, will be introduced and repeatedly left out of the debates). Since Phil is charming and Duke comes off like he might hurt your children, Phil is on his way to the White House. Duke frantically sticks to character attacks, frequently questioning the Camille/Steve cover story.

By now, more people associate Phil with his nickname "the Warrior" (thanks to Steve's suggested use of Patty Smyth's "Warrior" as his theme song, which he cheesily embraces at rallies with an imaginary six-shooter, etc.) than as the "Phil-Anderer." He starts seeing Camille less and less as the months drag on and stress builds; seeing her getting friendlier and friendlier with Steve doesn't help things.

At the second debate (which Randolph cannot participate in), Phil loses his composure/spunk and Duke ends up "winning," closing the gap between them. That night, Phil has a fight with Camille and the status of their relationship is left unclear. Distraught, Camille gets drunk with Steve and, inevitably, they sleep together.

In the morning, Camille insists it was a mistake and that she's got to leave the campaign immediately. Steve tries to stop her. Before she can leave, Phil discovers them together and has a fit. He fires Steve as his campaign manager and insults Camille.

Act Three

Disillusioned, depressed, and unemployed, Steve does the rock-bottom thing for a while. His mood does not improve when he sees Phil absolutely ace Duke in the third debate, securing enough support from moderate Republicans and independents to ensure the Presidency. News footage of Camille confirms it: she's seeing Phil again.

Duke suggests a special, fourth "Town Hall" debate to make up for his faceplant in the third one. Phil agrees (for some reason – possibly because he figures at this point he can't lose) and Duke sets it up for November 1st, the eve of the election.

While not officially connected to the campaign anymore, Steve goes to the debate (if even just to see Camille again) – which will be held in a ridiculous location to further emphasize how unnecessary it is. Duke reveals his secret weapon – undeniable proof of the affair and Phil's lying (or at least a brilliant bluff) – and seemed poised to turn the tide. He goes too far in saying something nasty about Camille, prompting Steve to stand up and passionately argue with him. Duke directly interrogates Steve about his relationship with Camille, and Steve refuses to lie – making the big admission that he's absolutely in love with her, but acknowledging that there was an illicit relationship between Phil and Camille.

As if things couldn't get more sensational, Steve's heart-on-his-sleeve romanticism gets to Duke (and/or his running mate) as well. He has a secret lover too – his handsome, young, equally homophobic male running mate! One of them admits to it (now I'm thinking the running mate should do it – thoughts?), and they kiss on live TV, effectively ruining their chances of winning as well.

Months go by. Steve's hard at work doing campaign management work for the President, who turns out to be ... Randolph Foley! Due to the timely fallout from the catastrophic Town Hall debate, America has elected the independent candidate President for the first time in history. (also, Steve will try to help Randolph debate and have a friendly relationship with him before so this doesn't seem so out of the blue)

Days or weeks later, Phil and Steve have an awkward reconciliation in which Phil reveals that the situation has caused him to change his ways. Steve tells him that Camille has retreated from the public eye and won't return his phone calls. Phil says they ended things a while ago with a clean break and haven't kept in touch.

Somehow (now I'm thinking Camille should be the one to re-establish contact), Camille and Steve reconnect and begin a tentative relationship.

Appendix E: Outline

ACT ONE

INT. BIG AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE – NIGHT

STEVE BENNETT and PHIL ANDERSON walk and talk behind-the-scenes at a major political rally. In between glad-handing, they discuss last minute tweaks to Phil's planned speech. Phil resists changing it and they banter for a while, but Steve ultimately convinces Phil to add a TBD phrase. After slight hesitation, Phil delivers the added phrase as Steve intended. The crowd loves it. Steve hangs back, behind the curtain.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY/NIGHT

Credits over footage of bustling Washington D.C. during the election season. Campaigns, confetti, chaotic strategy headquarters, etc. Montage of sorts fades into Phil, Steve, and their campaign crew watching the news - Phil narrowly becomes the Democratic nominee (they probably watch as the last Democratic challenger withdraws and puts his/her support behind Phil).

INT. NEW ORLEANS - SWANKY PENTHOUSE – NIGHT

Footage of Phil's celebration speech plays. Then rewinds as Phil, Steve, and others do shots to it. The party's in full swing. Phil runs off to schmooze with some campaign contributors and Steve roves around the party. His eye lands on CAMILLE LEDOUX, a sexy French-Cajun gal singing karaoke (really well). He waits until she's done and starts hitting on her. There's something there, but she ultimately rebuffs him.

INT. CAMPAIGN PLANE – DAY

Energized and confident, Steve talks Phil's ear off the plane. Phil's excited but sleepy. Steve walks back to the bathroom when he notices Camille in the back. He asks what she's doing there, and she replies that she's been hired on as an intern. This amuses Steve, who - as campaign manager - usually is aware of when interns are hired, and he good-naturedly grills her to find out how she got the job. She gets a little flustered and edgy so he doesn't persist, just tells her "welcome aboard" and goes back to his seat. Phil, not quite asleep yet, banters briefly with Steve. Steve tells him about Camille and asks if he knows her. Phil feigns ignorance.

INT. MIDWEST CITY - NEWSSTAND – DAY

Steve gets coffee from a newsstand and gets an unwelcome surprise - rumors of a tryst between Phil and Camille in the National Enquirer!

INT. MIDWEST CITY - PHIL'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Steve rushes back to Phil's hotel room to show him the tabloid. When he bursts in, Phil and Camille are post-coital in bed. Camille goes to leave, but Steve stops her. He enforces a "pow-wow" to determine how to proceed. Steve recommends that Camille immediately leave the campaign and lie low for a while. He outlines a brilliant strategy in which they can completely invalidate the rumor. Phil listens attentively and lauds the plan, but there's only one problem: "I'm in love with her." Steve has a minor panic attack.

ACT TWO

INT. RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Steve attends an awkward dinner with Phil and LONI ANDERSON, his wife, who isn't pleased about the Camille rumors. Steve and Phil criticize tabloid magazines and how inaccurate they are, Loni counters with examples of legitimate news items that first broke in the tabloids. She claims those are the exceptions, and even though things are peaceful, she still seems suspicious.

INT. BAR – NIGHT

Steve drinks with a FRIEND (or the INTERN under him) as they watch news of Republican nominee BUDDY DUKE's celebration speech. Even in a moment of triumph, he seems like a psychotic and disingenuous homophobe - Steve and his friend make snarky comments and Steve wonders who would vote for that guy.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS – DAY

Preliminary numbers come in - Phil's leading! But then, breaking news: Fox News shows footage of Phil and Camille embracing (non-sexually - think the Monica and Bill hug) and, in one seemingly damning, grainy shot, walking closely together like they're "sneaking off." Uh oh.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Loni shows up, now hopping mad. While Fox News isn't exactly a legitimate news source, it's not a tabloid. "People are starting to believe this stuff - is there something to it?" Loni wants to talk to Camille, but Steve deters her and improvises a solution: he tells her Camille is his girlfriend. She's not quite buying it, though.

EXT. VARIOUS CITIES - DAY/NIGHT

Time passes (possibly in a montage). The Camille-as-Steve's-girlfriend thing works wonders and allows Phil to see her more often. As a result of spending more time with her, he's more energetic and dynamic than ever, and continues to lead in the polls.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP – DAY

Steve and Camille hang out in a coffee shop and do some "show kissing" every so often in case paparazzi/political reporters are snapping pictures. Ice breaks between them a little more, and some of their staged joy becomes genuine.

INT. AUDITORIUM - BACK ROOM - DAY

At some big rally, Steve and Phil discuss the campaign. Steve's happy with the way things are going, but worries how long they'll be able to maintain the facade.

INT. MADISON HOTEL - DAY

Steve, Phil et al arrive to find Loni waiting for them. She has a strange, tense exchange with Camille and announces that she'll be coming with them on the road from now on. Phil hides his dismay well.

After Loni and Phil take off together, Camille expresses concern. She wants to leave the campaign. Steve bitterly laughs, saying it's too late for that - they don't want to screw up the cover story.

EXT. TBD SECRET LOCATION – NIGHT

Phil finds a brief window in which he can sneak off and meet Camille Deep Throat-style (in the political sense). They're probably going to have to break it off for a while. Camille thinks he used her and they have a fight, which ends in her threatening to confirm the affair to the press.

INT. PARADISE LOUNGE – NIGHT

Phil sees Camille go into a dive bar and frantically calls Steve to track her down. Steve does, and has a stressful time calming her down (might possibly be photographed and show up in the media as a spat).

INT. MADISON HOTEL – NIGHT

Steve “contains” Camille and keeps her off the grid - essentially babysitting her until he can be sure she won’t follow through on her threat. They talk about their backgrounds and start to connect - she tells him about her history with Phil, etc. Steve starts to fall for her.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

Phil meets with the man who will become his running mate. This is contrasted with a scene of Buddy meeting JEFF ELLINGTON - his running mate (who will turn out to be more dramatically important, but we don’t know that yet).

INT. DEBATE AUDITORIUM – DAY

First debate. RANDOLPH FOLEY, the independent candidate, is left out. Phil’s not quite as brilliant as he has been, but he still handily defeats the sweaty and altogether unpleasant Duke.

INT. CAMPAIGN CAR – DAY

Steve and Phil talk strategy. Phil’s discontent without Camille but is still reasonably happy about his standing in the polls. Steve suggests they change their campaign song to “The Warrior” (will be a brief scene earlier somewhere setting this up) - which Phil agrees to.

EXT. AMERICA - DAY/NIGHT

Montage set to “The Warrior” of Phil kicking ass and taking names. He notices Steve and Camille spending more time together.

INT. DEBATE AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

Second debate. Randolph can’t participate. Phil loses his composure/spunk somehow and Duke ends up “winning” the debate and closing the gap.

EXT. ANOTHER TBD SECRET LOCATION – NIGHT

Phil and Camille rendezvous briefly and fight - they end things “for good.”

INT. MOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Camille returns to the motel and gets drunk with Steve. Sex (or at least kissing).

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Camille insists it was a mistake and wants to leave the campaign immediately. Phil comes in to ask Steve about something campaign-related and discovers them together (mirror image of earlier “discovery” scene). Fallout. He fires Steve.

ACT THREE

INT. BAR – NIGHT

Steve drinks. Rock bottom. Sees the third debate on TV (Randolph can’t participate): stalemate - Phil’s lifeless, Duke’s crazy - pick one, America. Dead even in the polls.

INT. DUKE/ELLINGTON CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS – NIGHT

Post-debate: Duke and Ellington worry about how close the polls are (plus very subtle sexual tension to be paid off). Their campaign manager, Steve’s RIVAL (who has been introduced earlier somewhere), comes in with news of Steve’s firing and Camille’s disappearance. Footage of Loni barely holding it together helps them put the pieces together, and Duke thinks he’ll be able to win with character assassination.

Duke puts out an offer for a fourth debate on the eve of the election in light of their closeness, intending to corner him on the Camille issue.

INT. WHEREEVER PHIL IS – DAY

Phil briefly mulls over the debate idea, then hastily agrees - after all, he can pull it together and look more sane than this guy one more time.

INT. WHEREEVER THE DEBATE IS – DAY

In a TBD ridiculous location (like the historic site of the Lincoln/Douglas debates or onboard the U.S.S. Constitution), the debate starts up. Drunken, apathetic Steve remains unaware up until right before the debate, and when he realizes what’s going on, he knows Duke has something up his sleeve (maybe even directly finds out

about the Duke/Ellington plan). Since he still wants Phil to win, he frantically tries calling to get him to cancel.

Naturally, he can't get through to Phil, so he rushes to the debate, and by the time he gets there/through security etc. the candidates are already onstage ready to go.

Duke ambushes him with the information about Steve and the footage of Loni, urging him along by telling him "just tell America the truth." Phil tries to direct attention to something else, but then Duke sees Steve in the audience and questions him directly about his relationship with Camille. Steve refuses to lie, making the big admission that he's absolutely in love with Camille, but acknowledging that there was an illicit relationship between Phil and Camille.

Overcome by Steve's emotion and candor, Ellington walks up and smooches his secret lover - Duke!

(Big overriding question: can this scene work without Camille actually at the debate? I'm thinking in this version, she'd want to stay as far away as possible - and the climax would show her reacting to the big debate, so it's not like she'd be left out of the climax)

INT. MEETING ROOM – DAY

Inauguration Day. Steve and Phil banter together like old times, seemingly preparing for Phil's inauguration. They reconcile - Phil's making it work with Loni and neither has seen Camille since right before the election. "In its own screwed-up way, everything worked out for the best."

Reveal that Foley is the one being inaugurated.

INT. PARADISE LOUNGE – NIGHT

After leaving Phil, Steve hangs out for a little bit at the dive bar for old time's sake. There's Camille. Reconnection and the beginning of a tentative relationship.

Appendix F: Post-Barbara Outline

ACT ONE

- 1) INT. BAR – NIGHT: STAN BENNETT picks up a HOT COED at a bar during recap of Democratic debates on TV (where he introduces BARBARA ANDERSON, BILL BRADFORD, and a few of the other opponents)
- 2) INT. COED'S PLACE – MORNING: Stan wakes up instinctively (because the alarm clock fails) and leaves for the debate
- 3) INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS – DAY: Stan arrives, calmly goes about his duties, impresses JACKIE FORSYTHE and gets sent on errand to motel to look for Phil
- 4) EXT. DOWNTOWN – NIGHT: Stan searches for the motel
- 5) INT. MOTEL – NIGHT: Stan discovers PHIL ANDERSON in mid-coitus with JOLENE LEBLANC; Phil kicks her out and gets ready to go
- 6) EXT. DOWNTOWN – NIGHT: Stan negotiates his way into an aide position in exchange for keeping his mouth shut (**INCITING INCIDENT**)
- 7) INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS – NIGHT: After the debates conclude, Phil introduces Stan to Barbara, who isn't impressed by his slick attitude and introduces him to the antagonistic press secretary/head speechwriter, RONALD POE
- 8) INT. ANDERSON CAMPAIGN PLANE – DAY: Ronald issues menial tasks to Stan (practically asking him to be a stewardess), and he uses the opportunity to talk with Barbara and gently criticize her debate performance (continuation from before when she blew him off?)
- 9) EXT. SWING STATE SPEECH LOCATION – DAY: A key public appearance doesn't go well when Barbara's words are misconstrued and twisted
- 10) INT. WAR ROOM STYLE BACKROOM – NIGHT: Barbara's team meets to figure out how to combat the ill-timed negative publicity (close to Super Tuesday); Stan defies Ronald and blames him for the problem in the first place (and Jackie chews Stan out for insubordination)
- 11) INT. ANOTHER COLLEGE CAMPUS – NIGHT: Just prior to the final Democratic debate, Stan urges Barbara to address a key issue differently than Ronald had advised, which gets him canned
- 12) INT. ANOTHER BAR – NIGHT: Stan hits on another HOT LADY as the debates roll; he notices Barbara took his advice
- 13) EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BAR – NIGHT: Stan and his hot lady stumble home but get interrupted by the Anderson limo – Barbara and Phil rehire Stan as press secretary, firing Ronald (**ACT I BREAK**)

Act Two

- 14) INT. HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT: Stan outlines his major campaign strategies in an irreverent Power Point presentation – need to desexualize Barbara, emphasize her toughness, package her image and sell her appropriately
- 15) “BARBARA ANN” MONTAGE: With Stan’s help, Barbara changes her campaign and gets away from the “Barbara Ann” hottie image and gets tough (visits prisons, Afghanistan, rhetoric gets more combative and confident, etc.)
- 16) EXT./INT. CELEBRATION SOMEWHERE – NIGHT: With Barbara’s numbers now close to Bradford’s, she’s taken seriously as a candidate; all is well until Stan notices Jolene hanging around and tells her to beat it; Phil isn’t pleased about this but Stan doesn’t back down (triggering animosity between them)
- 17) EXT. LAST BIG CAMPAIGN STOP BEFORE SUPER TUESDAY – DAY: Stan strategizes with Barbara as footage of Republican frontrunner BUDDY DUKE ruining another candidate is on the TV, Stan urges her to hammer in on her firm support of gay marriage where Bradford remains elusive and wishy-washy so she appears to be the strong, fearless candidate
- 18) SUPER TUESDAY – DAY/NIGHT: Reactions from every camp (including brief glimpses at Duke’s TEAM) as results come in and Barbara leads **(45 MINUTE POINT)**
- 19) INT. RALLY LOCATION – NIGHT: As expected, Bradford withdraws from the race and announces his support for Barbara right before she gives her big nomination acceptance speech, but breaking news (because of a leak from Duke and his PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR) reveals photos of Phil with Jolene; Barbara crumbles and cuts the speech short
- 20) INT. DUKE CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS – SAME: Duke and his cronies watch Barbara crumble on TV, congratulate themselves
- 21) INT. PRIVATE LOCATION – NIGHT: Barbara fights with Phil about the Jolene allegations, goes nuts when he finally admits it
- 22) INT. ANDERSON TEMPORARY CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS – NIGHT: Jackie and the other aides panic because Barbara has gone AWOL and no one knows where she would be (except for Stan, because this is a pay-off to a conversation they had earlier about somewhere in Madison being her “favorite place in the world”)
- 23) INT. BARBARA’S HIDEOUT SPOT – NIGHT: Stan tracks Barbara down and finds her (disguised to avoid attention), they chat about things and she wants to quit the campaign, doesn’t want to deal with the humiliation again (which happened when Phil ran)
- 24) EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING – NIGHT: Stan and Barbara walk around, it’s romantic; then Stan reveals how he got the job and it appalls Barbara – after they fight about it, Stan says something sweet about “being glad I met you, though” and they kiss **(MIDPOINT)**

CHARACTERS

Stan Bennett
Barbara Anderson
Phil Anderson
Jackie Forsythe
Jolene Leblanc
Buddy Duke
Ronald Poe
Senator Bill Bradford
Jeff Ellington (Duke's Running Mate)
Barbara's Running Mate
Phil's Private Investigator
Hot Coed in Beginning
Hot Lady Stan Hits on Later
Misc. Staffers/Political Opponents

STRUCTURE

A-plot: Stan struggles to help Barbara win the election

Subplots

B-plot: Stan and Barbara fall in love (Act I – they meet and don't like each other, Act II – they know the truth and fall in love but must separate, Act III – they reconcile and end up together)

C-plot: Phil's affair and subsequent attempts to sabotage the election (Act I – Phil's affair leads to Stan's promotion, Act II – Phil resents Stan and his affair threatens the campaign, Act III – Phil blackmails his way back into the picture)

D-plot: Duke's mudslinging and scheming (Act I – destroys his other Republican opponents to win the nomination, Act II – through repeated attempts nearly (and ultimately) ruins Barbara's campaign, Act III – mudslinging and scheming backfires when his own personal life is revealed)

Sub-subplots

- 1) Randolph Foley repeatedly not allowed to debate (Act I – ignored, Act II – never allowed to debate, Act III – surprisingly becomes President)
- 2) Stan's womanizing (Act I – is what he's all about and he does it successfully, Act II – focus shifts to campaign, later bites him in the ass when women talk about his "fake name" strategy, Act III – done with all that once he's in love with Barbara)

Appendix G: Rewrite Proposal/Reel Breakdown

General Notes

- This is now a romantic comedy with satirical elements, rather than the other way around.
- "Hillary's Revenge" is the two-word pitch.
- Stan is a seasoned aide in his late 30s who's paid his dues (and isn't a cocky prick). Barbara is an actually believable Presidential candidate who's a Senator (rather than Governor because I want to cut down on any similarities to Sarah Palin) and is in her late 40s so the age difference isn't so large.
- Maybe Phil actually *was* President for a term before a sex scandal got him kicked out of office (too close to the Clintons?). I like the idea of them having gotten over it by writing an extremely popular self-help book that he keeps obnoxiously quoting.
- Stan has a girlfriend who urges him to move on from Barbara's "unwinnable" campaign. They probably break up early in the first half, though I wonder if they should stay together so she remains a presence as a secondary antagonist.
- Barbara and Phil have a young adult daughter who will factor into the story in some way. I'm thinking Stan does not, for various reasons, so that he and Barbara can bond in a sort of reverse *Lost in Translation*-type conversation where she describes the joys and terrors of raising her only daughter. Maybe something tragic even happened to a previous wife or something to further explain why Stan devoted himself so much to his job.
- Maybe Phil cheated/cheats on Barbara with one of his daughter's college friends! Because that's extra sleazy!
- The Republican running against Barbara will not be as important, since Phil is the primary villain of this story from the get go. While I'll move away from gay marriage, there still should be some central issue (like the green energy initiative in *The American President*) that gets brought up more than anything and ties stuff together.
- Stan is Ron's assistant, and has silently suffered with his crap for years. Once Ron is out and Phil finds out about Barbara and Stan, they become best buddies and cohorts.
- Jackie, in addition to being a bit less one-note, doesn't treat Barbara rudely (even if she's brusque with everyone else) and is more in the know on things.
- This is much more of a movie about politicians, not politics. My opinions won't come out as much, and we're mostly focusing on behind the scenes interactions.

Possible Minute by Minute/Reels

Reel One: Intro to Stan as he refuses to be courted by Barbara's competitors, who offer to pay him more. Sorry, he's dedicated to her. This irritates his longtime girlfriend, who accuses him of lacking ambition and being "trapped" by Barbara.

INCITING INCIDENT: Stan walks in on Phil cheating on Barbara with Jolene, but then tells Barbara shortly afterward!

Reel Two: Barbara's furious and spends as little time with Phil as possible, but doesn't want word of the affair to get out for fear of it hurting her chances/distracting people from the real issues, etc. Stan's girlfriend dumps him after she learns he refused a major bribe from Phil. On top of all of this, Barbara tanks during a debate. The two of them drown their sorrows together.

ACT ONE BREAK: Sex!

Reel Three: Aftermath – oh Jesus, what did we just do? This can't happen again. Some political stuff happens, perhaps with Ron writing terrible speeches and Stan unable to hold back any longer. Word gets out that Ron was also helping cover up some of Phil's other affairs, including one with a friend of his daughter's because he's a sack of shit.

PINCH: Ron gets unceremoniously shitcanned, Stan gets promoted to head speechwriter.

Reel Four: New plan of attack. Stan starts shaking things up, including a big moment where he wants to emphasize Barbara's natural beauty and shows how great she looks in a casual setting without makeup etc. (thanks for that!). This not only fills her with confidence, but leads to them sleeping together again. Dammit, this can't keep happening! But hey, with Stan writing kickass speeches and with her feeling happy and excited again for the first time in a while, she starts rising in the polls.

MIDPOINT: Barbara secures the Democratic nomination.

Reel Five: Phil starts secretly scheming with Ron, hiring him to spy on Barbara since she spends so much time away from him. Maybe he even tries to sabotage the campaign in some way. Stan and Barbara decide that, whatever this thing is going on between them, they need to put it on hold until after the election. But one last time shouldn't hurt. But of course it does because...

PINCH: Ron discovers, obtains proof that they have slept together at least once. Alerts Phil.

Reel Six: Barbara's popularity soars, well over that of the Republican challenger (or should it be incumbent?). She's set to make history. But just as things are looking as good as ever, Phil and Ron launch their little blackmail scheme and force her to pick him as the running mate, which undermines everything she's been trying to accomplish.

ACT TWO BREAK: Phil forces Barbara to choose him as running mate, fire Stan.

Reel Seven: Stan plays dirty for the first time – offers his services to the Republican nominee (or incumbent), giving them the information they need to bury Phil and, by extension, Barbara.

CLIMAX: (having problems with this still) Stan pulls some maneuvers in which he himself leaks the photos of him and Barbara together. But, he also uses his bribe money from the Republicans to hire several high-class prostitutes to seduce Phil and snag video of them together (maybe throughout Reel Seven, we'll see Phil recklessly sleeping with more women than usual given his power over Barbara, and it will be revealed they were all hired by Stan). This will be made public at the final Presidential debate (no Yankee Stadium 4th debate tomfoolery). Of course, the microscope gets placed on Stan, and he gives the big "screw my dignity, I love this woman" rom-com speech. In it, he will mention that Barbara is the Anderson they should have elected instead of Phil, and that he's ashamed of himself for having helped cover for Phil in the past when he was an aide (part of the reason he is so devoted to Barbara – guilt?). Barbara's greatest strength is also her greatest weakness: loyalty. Barbara responds by announcing her intentions to divorce/demote Phil and make Jackie her running mate (if I go this route, Jackie's way more likable). Now that Barbara figures she has no chance of winning, she bluntly lays out things the way they are, with a startling lack of political doublespeak. Fade out as Barbara keeps going all *Bulworth* on everybody...

Reel Eight/RESOLUTION: Weeks later, against all odds, Barbara manages to get elected as not only the first female President, but the first truly *honest* President as well. Maybe the reveal is a misdirection where we think Stan and Barbara are getting married but she actually is coming out for her inauguration (i.e. lots of talk about “the big day has finally arrived,” Stan’s in a tuxedo anxiously waiting for her, etc.). Barbara gets sworn in: “First order of business: balance the budget. Second order of business: bring our troops home. Third order of business: marry my speechwriter.”